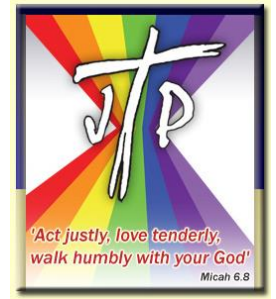




# Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth

The Diocese of Portsmouth covers Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, the Channel Isles and parts of Berkshire, Dorset and Oxfordshire

## Justice Peace and Social Responsibility



### Called to respect life from its beginning



*"Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you."<sup>1</sup> But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus". (Luke 1:29-31)*

At the Annunciation, the human life of Jesus Christ began in the womb of the Virgin Mary. At this moment, as with the ordinary conception of all humans, a new human life began.

### Reflect on Church teaching the value of every life

"The dignity of a person must be recognized in every human being from conception to natural death. The fruit of human generation, from the first moment of its existence, that is to say, from the moment the zygote has formed, demands the unconditional respect that is morally due to the human being in his bodily and spiritual totality.

The human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception; and therefore from that same moment his rights as a person must be recognized, among which in the first place is the inviolable right of every innocent human being to life" ***Donum vitae 1987***

"The human being must be respected - as a person - from the very first instant of his existence. The implementation of procedures of artificial fertilization has made possible various interventions upon embryos and human foetuses. The aims pursued are of various kinds: diagnostic and therapeutic, scientific and commercial. From all of this, serious problems arise. Can one speak of a right to experimentation upon human embryos for the purpose of scientific research? What norms or laws should be worked out with regard to this matter? The response to these problems presupposes a detailed reflection on the nature and specific identity - the word "status" is used - of the human embryo itself." ***Evangelium Vitae 1995***

"Pre-implantation diagnosis - connected as it is with artificial fertilization, which is itself always intrinsically illicit - is directed toward the qualitative selection and consequent destruction of embryos, which constitutes an act of abortion. Pre-implantation diagnosis is therefore the expression of a eugenic mentality.

Abortion is the deliberate and direct killing, by whatever means it is carried out, of a human being in the initial phase of his or her existence, extending from conception to birth". ***Dignitas Personae 2009***

## Be informed

There is clear church teaching on the value of every person, you may find it helpful to look at the Catechism: Article 5 the Fifth Commandment, §2270-2275 on abortion particularly. However continued research into reproduction processes increasingly challenges our ethics and beliefs.

Other Vatican documents and brief explanations may also be helpful and are available from the Catholic Truth Society for a very reasonable price [www.ctsbooks.org/](http://www.ctsbooks.org/)

For example

### **Dignitas Personae:** Instruction on Certain Bioethical Questions 2009

This document focuses on the dignity of the human embryo, and promotes biomedical research that is respectful of the dignity of every human being and of human procreation.

**Infertility** and Medically Assisted Conception by Dr Agneta Sutton which explains The Church's teaching on IVF & related issues

You may also find these websites useful

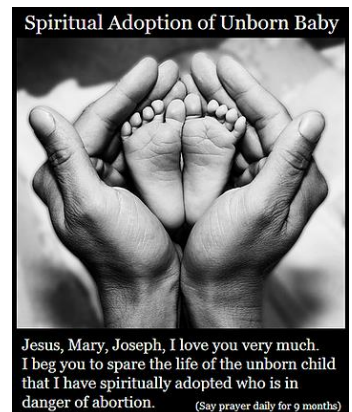
[www.corethics.org](http://www.corethics.org) Comment on Reproductive Ethics (core) an organisation that focuses on the ethical dilemmas surrounding human reproduction, particularly the new technologies of assisted conception. It has helpful information on issues and how to engage with legislative reform.

[www.lozierinstitute.org/](http://www.lozierinstitute.org/) - an American researchers committed to bringing life policy into cultural debate.

## Suggested Actions

Get informed on the positive messages of church teaching on the value of every human life and its ethical stand against some artificial methods of reproduction, which do not offer dignity to all human life, so that you can explain it clearly and positively.

- Create a family friendly parish where people with children and couples without children all feel comfortable and valued.
- Take part in a march for life rally [www.marchforlife.co.uk/](http://www.marchforlife.co.uk/) and write to you MP with your views on supporting church teaching and life.
- Prayer for the unborn, maybe consider spiritual adoption prayer spiritual adoption prayer spiritual adoption prayer [www.stmarysgosport.org.uk/#!pro-life/cffa](http://www.stmarysgosport.org.uk/#!pro-life/cffa)



### **Prayer**

O God, our Creator, all life is in your hands from conception until death. Help us to cherish our children and to reverence the awesome privilege of our share in creation. May all people live and die in dignity and love. Bless all those who defend the rights of the unborn, those with disabilities and the aged. Enlighten and be merciful toward those who fail to love, and give them peace. Let freedom be tempered by responsibility, integrity and morality Amen.

**Our Lady, Conceived Immaculate, pray for us.  
St. Gabriel, pray for us.**

## Fact sheet

### **The Church's teaching about human embryos.**

Some helpful information of different practices which are currently taking place or being researched and Church teaching.

At the moment of conception, a new human life began. This is of course also true of the fusion of sperm with ovum in a laboratory dish. As one of the makers of the first "test-tube baby" acknowledged in describing the few-days-old, the full-stop-sized embryo as "a microscopic human being in the very earliest stage of its development" (A Matter of Life, Steptoe and Edwards).

### **Contraception**

Many human embryos are daily destroyed by so-called contraceptive pills which have a back-up effect of ending any lives which have begun. " The Church's teaching on Marriage also outlaws other artificial though non-destructive methods of contraception. See *Humanae Vitae* 1968"

### **IVF**

The Church also has very good reasons for strongly opposing any laboratory manufacture of human beings by IVF. Although kindly meant in giving parents much-wanted children, IVF involves large-scale destruction of early human beings as failing 'quality control' or as being otherwise 'surplus to requirements'.

For this reason, the church holds that a child should be created through the sexual love of man and woman, not by a scientist in a laboratory dish as if he or she were a manufactured object.

### **Embryonic stem cells**

The Church opposes human embryonic stem cell research as requiring the harvesting of cells from an embryo: an absolutely unacceptable act which destroys very young humans. The Church supports research that involves stem cells from adult tissues and the umbilical cord.

As a practical matter, enormous sums have been wasted on unethical research, which in spite of the hype has not produced much useful knowledge. This money could have been spent on ethical use of adult stem cells, which are already producing treatments for over 150 conditions.

### **Three parent embryo**

The three-parent embryo is a step further. There is wide international objection on medical grounds to untested procedures which would interfere with the germ-line and affect future generations, possibly causing disability not only in the child born but in the child's descendants for generations to come. These are not simple medical treatments but dangerous experiments and a further step in treating human beings as mere things or commodities.

**Abortion** is the deliberate and direct killing, by whatever means it is carried out, of a human being in the initial phase of his or her existence, extending from conception to birth.

[Non-destructive stem cell research is] considered licit. This is generally the case when tissues are taken from: a) an adult organism; b) the blood of the umbilical cord at the time of birth; c) fetuses who have died of natural causes. The obtaining of stem cells from a living human embryo, on the other hand, invariably causes the death of the embryo and is consequently gravely illicit.